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Essays, Expositions, &c.

RELIGION AT HOME.

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(The Circular Letter of the North Western Baptist Association for 1866.)

THERE is scarcely a word in our language around which cluster so many fond memories and warm affections, as around that little word, "HOME." Within its sacred circle our eyes first open upon the world, and for a considerable portion of life it is all the world to us. Here we are nursed and watched by that thoughtful, loving care, which home only can supply. Here we imbibe principles and receive impressions which influence us for good or for evil as long as we live, and which are transmitted by us to unborn generations. For a long time home influence exerts its power over the mind almost entirely unchecked, and at a season, too, when the mind is most susceptible of impressions. No wonder, then, that such impressions are rarely, if ever, wholly obliterated.

The family is a divine institution. It is God's provision for perpetuating and training our race, and like all his provisions it is full of wisdom and goodness; most admirably adapted to manifest his glory, and contribute to the comfort and happiness of man. The united wisdom of created beings could not devise a scheme which would be so fraught with blessing as this. In what other circumstances could the numberless wants of infancy be so abundantly and cheerfully supplied—the waywardness and follies of childhood and youth so patiently endured, and so wisely curbed—the sick and the sorrowful so carefully watched, and so tenderly nursed? Where else could the feebleness of age find a resting-place after the hard toils of life's busy day? And where is the spirit which does not yearn to end its conflict with mortal things, leaning on the bosom of its own peaceful home?

It would be no difficult thing to create a fancy picture of home, an ideal which the world has never seen, nor is likely to see, so long as sin is the rule in families, and piety the exception. We must not forget that our rebellion

against God has introduced confusion and misery into all his wise and beneficent arrangements for our well-being. The earth was cursed for man's sin. Whatever of light and comfort survived the fall, whatever of hope had been induced by the first promise, must have been terribly darkened and crushed when Cain rose up in anger against Abel his brother and slew him. And though many blessings result from the family institution, yet it is only as true piety prevails in our homes that they can become the abodes of true joy—schools where spirits are trained for noble Godlike work on earth—emblems of, and preparatives for, the mansions of the Father's house above.

We feel, brethren, that it is impossible for us to deal faithfully with this subject, without incurring a considerable amount of self-condemnation; and if our remarks should produce the same result on other minds, we most earnestly pray that together we may humbly seek pardon for past neglects, and obtain grace for a more consistent discharge of home duties in the future.

To exhibit religion in our homes, it must enter largely into *all home training*. Cecil said, "Religion begins in the family. One of the holiest sanctuaries on earth is home; the education of the soul for eternity begins at the fireside. The principle of love which is to be carried through the universe, is first unfolded in the family." Matthew Henry said, "The way to keep sin out of the house is to keep up religion in the house, which will be the most effectual antidote to Satan's poison." "If there were a church in every house, there would be such a church in our land as would make it a blessing throughout the whole earth." Parental responsibility is most momentous and solemn. To be entrusted with the training of immortal beings, whom we must necessarily influence to such an enormous extent, is one of the most weighty considerations on which the human mind can dwell. If children are committed to our care, we *must* train them for something; we can no more help it than we can help our own existence. We are daily doing something either to ennoble them, or to make them more ignoble. Under us they will learn to concentrate all their wishes and schemes upon themselves, or to mind, to some extent at least, the things of others. Taught by our precepts, and especially by our example, they will learn to regard this world as all in all, or to remember that the affairs of the soul and eternity demand their supreme attention. And this training will commence very early. While the father is yet marking the moment of its birth, the infant's first pulse has dated its training for eternity. This sentiment should reign in every parent's heart, and preside over every engagement, every joy, and every event of his home. Leigh Richmond understood all this well when he wrote to his son:—"If you are to die a boy, you must look for a boy's religion, a boy's knowledge, a boy's faith, a boy's Saviour, a boy's salvation; or else a boy's ignorance, a boy's obstinacy, a boy's unbelief, a boy's idolatry, a boy's destruction." The Christian mother especially can do much to influence the young mind while in its most plastic state. It is almost exclusively under her tuition, consequently she has the first and best chance that life ever presents. "Heaven," it has been said, "is nearer to us in infancy than ever after." Hannah said respecting Samuel, "For this child I prayed, and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him; therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord." If mothers would but lend their children to the Lord, and nurse them for him, instead of giving them to the world and nursing them for that, what a change would come over our families, our churches, and over society generally. Let the mother reflect as she gazes with fond delight on the lovely form of her infant charge, that it is infinitely more important that she should train that soul for God, than that she should fit it to shine in mere worldly circles. Let her feel, that whilst she is under obligation to give it the best training she can in secular things, that she cannot neglect the higher, and more sacred duty of endeavouring to store its mind with divine knowledge. Let her by controlling her own sinful passions, aid betimes her offspring in the important work of self-government, and let her inculcate with unceasing diligence all that is calculated

rightly to educate the moral feeling. Immense mischief is done to our race at the very threshold of its existence. New comers are treated for the most part, not as candidates for eternity, but as creatures of time only. They are considered incapable of receiving impressions which may bear upon their eternal destiny; they must arrive at a certain age ere they will be proper subjects for religious instruction and control. These, however, we regard as most fatal and injurious errors; against them we would especially warn all Christian mothers. Let all such, in heart and effort, dedicate from the first their children to God; and by their looks of smiling love, their words of truthful affections, and their uniform acts of purity, point those children to the noble and the good. Above all, let them resort to earnest prayer under an abiding conviction that God only can make their efforts prosperous; and let them not only take their children upon their hearts to a throne of grace, but let them take them in person. "When I was a child," said a good old man, "my mother used to take me to kneel down beside her, and place her hand on my head while she taught me to pray. She died when I was young, but still when going to do wrong, I seemed to feel her soft hand upon my head. When I grew to be a man, the thought of that same hand still kept me safe."

"That hallow'd touch was ne'er forgot,
And now, though time hath set
His frosty seal upon my lot,
Those temples feel it yet."

"And if I e'er in heaven appear,
A mother's holy prayer,
A mother's hand and gentle tear,
That pointed to a Saviour dear,
Hath led the wanderer there."

One good man has said, "With very many opportunities of observation, I have seen it almost invariably happen that the mother's influence for good or evil in the family is superior to that of the father. Thus, if the mother were a God-fearing, and consistently pious woman, I have very generally found that the children, sooner or later, become assimilated to her in character, altogether irrespective of the character of the father; while I have not seen the converse hold good save in a very few instances." Jacob Abbot speaks of a society, consisting of some six-and-twenty students, all of whom, it was ascertained upon inquiry, with the exception of two, could trace their first serious impressions of divine truth, under God, to the prayers and instructions of their mothers.

But though a mother's influence largely preponderates during the days of infancy, she must not be left to struggle alone in the godly upbringing of children. This work should engage the most earnest, and most prayerful attention of both parents. The father who pleads the pressure of business engagements, the necessity of intellectual culture, or his need of bracing recreation, as an excuse for neglecting the moral and religious training of his offspring, has not yet arrived at a proper sense of his obligations, and will not be held guiltless by Him who has laid those solemn obligations upon him. If we intend religion to prosper in our homes, both fathers and mothers must do homage to it, in the general training and bringing up of the young. In seeking for them secular instruction we should not needlessly expose them to influences which will injure their morals, sear their consciences, and jeopardise their eternal salvation. In putting them to work or business, our main concern should not be to obtain for them lucrative positions in life, but to fix them in an atmosphere of a higher and holier kind. However gratifying it may be to the vanity of parents to behold their children shine in the foremost ranks of worldly men, it is far more satisfactory to know that they are the servants of God, and that they are aspiring to be foremost amongst those who are doing what they can to lessen the sin and misery of their race. In the former

position they may dazzle for a moment; in the latter they may be unhonoured below, but they "shall shine as the the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever." The amusements and recreation of home should have no tendency to vice, unless we wish to furnish our children with weapons by which they may secure their own destruction. And viewing the tendencies of the day, this matter may well tax the wisdom and prudence of parents who are deeply concerned for the spiritual good of the rising race. To condemn and prohibit all amusement is foolish, and worse than useless. The buoyancy of youth can no more be repressed than the gambols of the inferior animals. Youth is a joyous season; nor should parents and guardians frown down that joy, but to the utmost of their ability aid and guide it. But in this matter it is as difficult to give rules as it is to observe them. Families are so many little independencies, each one having a domain peculiar to itself, and with which its neighbour cannot interfere. So that to give human rules which may apply with equal force to every case, is about as useless as to attempt to reduce every object in nature to the same dead level of uniformity. The word of God, however, contains either specific laws, or general principles, which, if faithfully observed, will guide us in all things to right conclusions. The discipline of home should be conducted on religious principles; and a home without discipline, is, generally speaking, a home without religion. Hurtful indulgence, and want of firmness in home training, constitute one of the most fruitful sources of family disaster. And many good men have been wanting here. The faithful biography of the Bible furnishes us with several painful examples of this kind. So good natured and easy was the venerable father of Hophni and Phinehas, that he could scarcely check them in aught they did. But did these young men fare the better in the end for this indulgence? Very far from it. They made themselves vile; and Eli—good simple man—could by no means cross them so as to restrain them in the least. So Hophni and Phinehas grew up to be not only a scandal to their profession, but a disgrace to mankind. Their life was characterised by enormous villainy, and so their death was in every way befitting the career they had run. Nor did their poor aged father escape the consequences of his criminal indulgence. For on the day his sons perished by the sword of the Philistines, the father died of a broken neck, and probably also of a broken heart. David indulged his son Adonijah to such an extent that we are told "that his father had not displeased him at any time," but apparently had gratified his wishes in all things. Was this good for Adonijah? By no means. He became a vain and ambitious young man, who would have sacrificed the lives of his brothers, and even that of his father also, to secure to himself the throne of Israel, to which he had no right. Such are but samples of the mischiefs and miseries resulting from foolish parental indulgence, and the want of loving firmness in restraining children's vices. The rule of home should be pre-eminently a rule of love, mixed with wisdom and firmness. Task and terror will but defeat their own purposes. Authority there must be, but if destined to exert a religious influence, it will not be despotic and peremptory, but fatherly and kind. Restraint there ought to be, not capricious and passionate, but gentle as the cords of love can make it. Teaching there must be, but to be efficient it need not be very formal, nor made to gall like a heavy burden on any except the most vicious and depraved. It will best tend to a religious purpose, by inviting the confidence and companionship of the taught: and by being embodied in a loving, gentle spirit; exhibited in a sincere and truthful conduct, and shining in a conversation becoming the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We must carefully maintain *family worship* if we would foster "religion at home." Family worship has been designated the great feeder of family religion. Nor can we understand how a family can take to itself the honoured name of Christian, where God is not constantly and visibly worshipped. There may be Christians among its members, but as a family organisation it does not "show to the generation to come the praises of the Lord and his

strength, and the wonderful works which he hath done." In such a household God is not honoured, religion is not fostered, nor exhibited as a thing of paramount importance. Many excuses may be pleaded by heads of families for the neglect of this duty, but it is an omission which cannot be atoned for in any other way. The pressure of labour and the calls of business may lead many to attempt self-justification in this neglect; the lack of gifts and the fear of man may cause others to shrink from it; but will these pretexts answer the accusings of an awakened conscience in prospect of death, will they bear the scrutiny of Him who shall sit on the great white throne, and award to every man according to the deeds done in the body? If you are a Christian and at the head of a family you cannot frame an excuse for the habitual neglect of this duty, which will now bear the light of truth, and under a proper sense of the responsibility of your position excuses would melt away like vapours before the advancing sun. In many cases the erection of a family altar has been one of the first proofs of a genuine change of heart. And their can be no greater evidence of religious decline than the crumbling away of the family altar. It is a sad thing when those appointed by God to rule and guide the household, cease to utter the voice of thanksgiving and praise, and act no longer the part of father-priest.

Who can estimate the value of constant, cheerful, spiritual family worship? Rightly performed it becomes the principal guide of family life, the balance wheel in the moral machinery of home. It serves to remind those who conduct it, that they must *live* their prayers if they wish them to benefit those who *hear* them. It is a standing acknowledgment of the abounding goodness and loving care of our Heavenly Father, and must more or less impress the minds of all who come in contact with it with a sense of their dependence on Him. It is a constant protest against sin, a constant reminder of our need of pardon, a perpetual recognition of the great sacrifice once offered for our redemption. God is honoured by the reading of his precious word; we become acquainted with his counsels, and his requirements; and who can tell what fruit may be produced in after years from this seed of everlasting truth? In family worship God is placed on the throne of the universe, and acknowledged as supreme governor. When the toils of the day are ended, and evening invites us to repose, His hand is confessed in all the mercies and dangers of the day. In the morning He is adored for His preserving, watchful care, and its continuance through the day is again invoked. The parent goes direct to God himself, and takes his family with him, and to him who hears and answers prayer he utters all his wants, and commits all his concerns. The poet Burns, though destitute of practical sympathy with family worship, yet sang of it in some of his most exquisite strains. He had seen it; as a poet he had enjoyed it; and though he lived to trample upon that home religion which his father's life exemplified, that did not prevent him from drawing a perfect word picture of the practice. It is as follows:

"Then kneeling down to Heaven's eternal king,
The saint, the father, and the husband prays;
Hope springs triumphant on exulting wing
That thus they all shall meet in future days,
There ever bask in uncreated rays,
No more to sigh, nor shed the bitter tear,
Together hymning their Creator's praise
In such society, yet still more dear,
While circling time moves round in an eternal sphere."

In cases not a few, that lofty genius but moral wreck gave unequivocal symptoms of his scepticism, and we know from the sad history of his life that he often trampled the truth of God in the dust. Yet in one of his letters, he has recorded his purpose to have a much loved son trained according to the Bible. The religion he had witnessed in the home of his childhood exerted

some influence upon him, notwithstanding all his errors. And if childhood's ears are accustomed to a father's or a mother's prayers, the influence of them is scarcely ever wholly lost. They may wander far from their childhood's home, but its worship and discipline will seldom be effaced from heart and memory.

The various members of a household may practice religion at home *by a faithful discharge of the obligations arising out of the family relation.* It may be presumed that in Christian families, where God is worshipped, and where His word is regarded as the only standard of appeal, that there will be a distinct recognition of the several obligations springing out of the family union. There we may expect that the husband will dwell with the wife in love, giving honour unto her as unto the weaker vessel; that the wife will yield a ready and cheerful obedience to him who is over her in the Lord; that fathers will not provoke their children to wrath, and thus discourage and disgust them, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; that children will obey their parents, giving them due honour, and in every place becoming respect; that servants will render obedience to their masters according to the flesh, "not with eye-service as men pleasers, but as the servants of Christ doing the will of God from the heart;" and masters will remember that they have a master in heaven, with whom there is no respect of persons, who will judge the prince and the peasant by the same unerring rule of righteousness; seniors will be gentle and hopeful to juniors, and juniors respectful and submissive to seniors; brothers will not be haughty and exacting towards sisters, nor will sisters be fickle and false to brothers. What a paradise would home be, were all its inmates largely under the influence of religion; all possessed of the spirit of Christ; all stimulated by His example to deeds of noble, disinterested piety! A few such homes there are in our land, would to God they were multiplied by tens of thousands. But we fear the majority of families call not upon the name of the Lord. In others the ungodly and godly dwell together, the righteous and the wicked live in closest proximity to each other. In such cases it is especially needful to "show piety at home." To do so may be hard, difficult, and self-denying, but it will yield an ample and glorious reward. Let the wife, by "a chaste conversation coupled with fear," seek to win the husband who obeys not the word. Let the pious sons and daughters of godless parents strive to imitate the example of Him who declared that His gospel would be the occasion of persecution and division in families. Let the converted branches of households oppose harshness by kindness, temper by patience; let them exhibit truthfulness in word and deed, fidelity to conscience, and an earnest devotion to all the duties of family life, and their example cannot fail to exert a beneficial influence, and may be employed by the Holy Spirit to save souls from death, and to bring to "a home in heaven" those who have dwelt in the same home on earth.

This exhibition of true piety in connection with family life is one of the things most needed in the present day. From this inner circle the power of religion must go forth to quicken church life, and quickened church life will act with greater effect upon the outlying world. There is nothing exciting and pompous about the quiet, unobtrusive, earnest home life of a devoted Christian, but the results of such a life, as exhibited in that world where all is true, may be far more magnificent than the results of a life which in this world of shams calls forth the applause of admiring crowds.

THE SPIRITS IN PRISON.

1 Peter iii. 18—22.

We can scarcely hope that any remark we may have to offer respecting a controverted passage of Scripture will wear the aspect of originality. We do not, therefore, approach the subject with such an expectation, but aim simply at a brief notice of those interpretations which we think erroneous, and also of that which amidst conflicting opinions commends itself to our judgment as most in harmony with truth.

Four general views of the meaning of the apostle have divided the suffrages of the critical world. The church of Rome finds in the passage a recognition of the doctrine of an intermediate state where sins not mortal may be expiated by purgatorial fires. Protestants of the English church, represented by Bishop Horsley, receive it as a proof text for that article of their creed which affirms that Christ "descended into hell," or the invisible state; he also believes it to be here affirmed that Christ proclaimed the completion of his work to the spirits of penitent antediluvians. From Scotland we have the exposition of Dr. Brown which is to the effect that "the spirits in prision" are the unregenerate to whom the Saviour, during his life, preached repentance and remission of sins. The view most common in the circles of English dissent is that the writer refers to sinners before the flood and the instrumentalities by which they were warned to flee from the wrath to come.

To the first of these interpretations there are insuperable objections. It is evident that the idea of an intermediate purgatorial state is not in the text. Leaving out of the question the fact that such an interpretation would be in opposition to the entire system of revealed truth, the term "prison," on which the doctrine chiefly rests is not sufficient to sustain it. There is only one other instance in the New Testament in which it can be supposed to refer to the invisible state, and that not at all favourable to the idea of purgatorial purification. John in the Book of Revelation, speaking of the close of the millenial period, says:—"When the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison," (Rev. xx. 7). If the word as used here has any reference to the invisible state it cannot be to purgatory but to hell, and we are not at liberty to give to it in the passage under consideration, a new and unheard of meaning unless it can be shewn that the scope and bearing of the context requires it.

Another difficulty in the way of accepting the Roman Catholic interpretation is, that the supposed mission of Christ is inconsistent with the idea of purgatory as developed by its advocates. Their doctrine is that those who enter it expiate their faults by suffering, and that having thus atoned for the venial sins of their earthly course, they pass to the mansions of the blessed. What, then, can the preaching of the Saviour have to do with them? It is not repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ that is to save them, but suffering. They cannot approach God until the purging fire has removed their stains. If "the spirits in prison" are the spirits in purgatory the mission is unaccountable. It could have no relation to their state. But this is not all. The spirits to whom Christ is said to have preached, the text states to be those who lived in the days of Noah. The question at once arises—why preach to them alone? What was there in their earthly character that entitled them to a special mission? What adaptation had the preaching of Christ to them which it had not to their companions in tribulation? Or, if equally adapted to bless all, was Christ more merciful to those great sinners than to those who succeeded them on the earth and whose guilt was less prominent. Each of these questions has its special difficulty.

We may observe also, that if the word "prison" means purgatory, our adversaries being judges, the antediluvians could not have been its occupants. According to them, great transgressors are not admitted. Those alone enter

whose defects are failings rather than faults. In the main their character is good, but venial sins unfit them for the pure society of heaven, and therefore to be made meet for that high state they pass through the cleansing fires. But the moral condition of those who lived in the days of Noah was the reverse of this. "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." They were "the world of the ungodly" "condemned" by the faith of Noah. Stronger language cannot be used to describe utter alienation from God. Purgatory, if it exists, is a receptacle for spirits not charged with mortal sin; the prison of the text was occupied by those who were,—it cannot refer therefore to such a state.

The next interpretation is that of Bishop Horsley. He regards the words "being put to death in the flesh but quickened by the Spirit" as being correctly rendered thus—"being put to death in the flesh, but continued, or remaining alive in the spirit." They refer, he says, to the human body and soul of Christ. The former was put to death, but the latter survived and went to the invisible state to preach to the penitent antediluvians.

With a slight modification we are disposed to adopt this view of the meaning of the words "quickened by the Spirit." Several critics of eminence are agreed in the opinion that the Holy Spirit is not meant. But are we shut up to the conclusion that the apostle intends that the application of the word "spirit," should be strictly limited to the human soul of Christ? It is true the two parts of the sentence are antithetic, the terms "being shut to death" and quickened; "flesh" and "spirit" being respectively opposed to each other. But would not the antithesis be quite as complete between flesh and spirit if we suppose there is no special reference either to the human soul or to the divine nature of Christ, but simply a general statement concerning the continued life of his spiritual nature whether human or divine. Such a contrast would not be without one example at least, for we read that "the Egyptians are men and not God, and their horses *flesh* and not *spirit*." Certainly what would then be affirmed is true of both, and we are somewhat doubtful whether the sacred writers were accustomed at all times to make such nice distinctions as our scholastic theology gives them credit for.

We might retain the company of the Bishop were it not for the difficulties into which we should be brought as we advance further along the path. Having read "being put to death in the flesh but continued or remaining alive in the spirit," he adds "by which he went and preached to the spirits in safe keeping." By a place of "safe keeping" he understands a condition different from that we call heaven. The "spirits" are those of penitent antediluvians, and the "preaching" according to him is an annunciation of the Saviour's work. If it could be made out that there is a separate state into which disembodied spirits enter there would be no difficulty in believing that the spirit of Christ went there on the death of his body, and we might possibly admit also, that he preached to the spirits there. But these spirits are the spirits of antediluvian penitents, and it is unfortunate that they are created for the occasion. Not a syllable do the Scriptures utter that can be tortured into the confession, that there existed such persons at the time of the flood; on the contrary, all the information they give points to an opposite conclusion. Admitting that at the eleventh hour penitents were found among that doomed race, the question arises, why should they be favoured in hades with a special communication? What was there peculiar in their position that to them and not to others the Saviour should announce the completion of his sacrifice? The little information we have on the subject leads us to suppose that such a mission would be a work of supererogation for Moses and Elias, inhabitants of the invisible world were not ignorant of "the decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem," and it is not far to the conclusion that other spirits were possessed of the same information.

The third view of the passage is that of Dr. Brown, who believes it to refer to

the unregenerate who were favoured with the Saviour's ministry while he was on the earth. He thinks that the ungodly of all times may be properly described as "spirits in prison," and for proof directs us to the language of the prophet Isaiah, which teaches that Christ was, "to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound," and that he was prepared for this work by "the Spirit of the Lord God." So that when the apostle says that by the spirit he preached to spirits in prison, he simply records what had long been foretold. But plausible as this may seem, there is, we think, a fatal objection in the fact that the text immediately proceeds to specify a particular class of the ungodly. Christ "preached unto the spirits in prison which sometime were disobedient when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah." It is true Dr. Brown considers the case of the antediluvians, introduced here, as an example or type of the unregenerate who were the subjects of the Saviour's ministry. But the introduction of such an illustration in this place appears exceedingly unnatural. If "the spirits in prison" are the wicked men of Christ's time, we can scarcely conceive how, by any known law of mind, the writer could pass over the long suffering of Christ as manifested in the days of his flesh in order to produce an example from times anterior to the deluge.

The last interpretation to which we refer and which seems to us to be the correct one, supposes the apostle to say that Christ in his spiritual nature preached to the antediluvians in the days of Noah. He is exhorting believers to patience in the endurance of wrong, and for their encouragement points to the example of the Saviour. They had suffered from evil doers and he had done the same for he had been "put to death in the flesh." Upon the word "flesh," and its connection with the long-suffering of Christ, the peculiar character of the thought and language of the following verses seems to turn. Having said he was "put to death in the flesh," nothing could be more natural than to add "but continued alive in the spirit." And then being full of the idea of the long-suffering of the Saviour how easily would the word "spirit" recall the declaration "my spirit shall not always strive with man." It was thus that the thoughts of the writer were carried to the antediluvian period, and since that dispensation, like all others, was "in the hands of the Mediator," (Gal. iii. 19); and the prophets spoke by the Spirit of Christ which was in them; it was not difficult to find in Noah, the preacher of righteousness, another example of the Saviour's forbearance and long suffering. Thus rapidly identifying Christ with the past, and the word "spirit" suggesting also the *present condition* of the antediluvians as disembodied and suffering, he adds "by which he went and preached to the spirits in prison which sometimes were disobedient when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah."

A review of the following chapter strengthens our confidence in the general accuracy of this interpretation. The thoughts of the writer still run in the same course and take the same form. There is an evident reference to the two examples of long suffering adduced by him in the preceding passage. "Forasmuch as Christ also hath suffered for us *in the flesh* arm yourselves likewise with the same mind." And then having given utterance to reflections arising from this renewed mention of Christ's death, he adds "For this cause the *gospel is preached to them that are dead*." Surely not after they were dead, for it was the occasion of their being "judged *in the flesh*." Equally clear it seems to be that when Christ preached to the spirits in prison it was before they entered that dark abode. And then to complete the parallel the apostle adds that while these early believers were judged and condemned in the flesh like their Master, like him also they "lived according to God in the spirit."

Southport. J. J.

LIVING ON CHRIST.—The grace that leads to Christ previously comes from Christ; if I live *on* him, I feel that I am enabled to live *to* him; there is nothing will teach me to live above the world but living upon Christ.

THE ADMISSION OF CHURCHES WHICH ARE NEUTRAL AS TO BAPTISM TO THE CONGREGATIONAL UNION.

THE application last year of two Baptist ministers who were pastors of mixed churches, for admission to the Congregational Union, has led to the passing of a resolution this year, at the annual meeting of that body, to admit to it ALL MIXED CHURCHES IN WHICH BAPTISTS AND PÆDOBAPTISTS ARE PLACED ON AN EQUALITY. The following resolution was passed on Tuesday, the 7th of May, almost unanimously, by a meeting of ministers and delegates which is said to have been the largest yet known since the Union was formed:

"That this assembly, while adhering to the terms of the declaration of Church faith and order on the subject of Infant Baptism, and maintaining the right of the union to take any action in conformity with the principles therein asserted which may at any time appear expedient, instructs the committee not to regard clause 18 as excluding from the fellowship of communion, churches in which the privileges of membership and eligibility to office are not dependent on the opinions held regarding either the subjects or the mode of baptism."

The Rev. J. G. Rogers, in submitting the motion, said, that it did not affect those union churches which do not allow the pastor to be a Pædobaptist; but only those which "admit Baptists and Pædobaptists on perfectly equal terms." He was afraid that such churches were very few. He thought that those Baptists whom the motion would admit, differed as much "from THE BAPTISTS" as from the Union; because such Baptists "do not regard conformity with their views on baptism as an essential condition of church-membership, or as a proper basis of sectarian distinction."

The following is "clause 18" of the Union's own declaration of church faith and order—the clause referred to in the resolution—"They believe in the perpetual obligation of Baptism and the Holy Supper; the former to be administered to all converts to Christianity and every child, by the application of water to the subject, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; the latter to be celebrated by Christian churches as a token of faith in the Saviour, and of brotherly love."

The Rev. John Kelly, in seconding the motion, thought that the Baptists whom it was proposed to admit might perhaps be led to "renounce the mistake," as to Pædobaptism, into which they had fallen. He hoped that the number of churches constituted on the principle to which the motion referred would increase. The Rev. Dr. Halley said, "I do not quite like that this Union should speak with a voice that is very clear and distinct respecting infant baptism, and then say that it is not to be interpreted so as to exclude persons who will not speak with the same clear and distinct voice upon the subject; because the voice of this Union, is the voice of those who are known to be its members. I should like that the resolution should be so framed as to prevent its being said that this article of our denomination, is to be understood in a non-natural sense, and does not mean what it seems to mean: because we might take any other article and say the same thing respecting it, that it is not to be understood so as to exclude those who think differently."

The Rev. Robert Ashton said that there were some thirty Union churches in the country; and those whom they would send to the assembly could not be restrained from advocating their Baptist opinions. He moved the previous question, and was seconded by Mr. Clark.

The Rev. G. W. Conder said, he thought that the members of the Union who had opposed this movement, had feared the OBJECT and INTENTIONS of friends coming to them holding Baptist sentiments. But these friends, by asking to be admitted, said, "we are willing to let this matter [baptism] be of very little importance; to treat it in fact here, and for all purposes for which you are gathered together, as of no importance, if you are willing to treat it so." He would like the Union to say,—"There is our clause [relating to baptism and the Supper] we do not propose to alter or modify it; but if you will come

and take your stand along with us, there is our hand, and we give it you heartily."

The Rev. R. W. Dale said, "with regard to the non-natural interpretation of a particular clause in our declaration of our faith and order, we do not desire to impose any interpretation of that clause. Its meaning is clear. We distinctly affirm that we adhere to it in its natural meaning; only we say that while the Union has confessed that to be THE FAITH OF ITS MEMBERS, we intend henceforth to let persons into the Union who do not hold that particular article of belief."

Mr. J. G. Rogers, in consequence of what Dr. Halley had said, altered the wording of his motion to prevent the possibility of the idea occurring to any mind, that clause 18, was by this resolution directed to be understood in a non-natural sense. The words "the fellowship of communion," were substituted for "the fellowship of the Union;" but the trifling alterations made left the motion substantially the same. For Mr. Ashton's amendment there were about twelve votes, the resolution was carried by an overwhelming majority amid loud applause.

Afterwards the members of the Union dined together at the Bridge House Hotel. After "the Queen" had been duly honoured, the Rev. Edward White, one of the Baptists who had applied for admission, spoke. He said that he wished to have his place among Independents because he was convinced that Independents represented the Catholic church. He wished to assure the brethren that they needed not to have any fears about his aiming to convert them. He should not try to immerse them, they might be well assured. He believed that the resolutions of the Union would produce a good impression upon the minds of the Baptist denomination. He thought it scarcely possible to estimate the importance of what has been done.

We have in this resolution the terms on which, for the present, the congregational body is willing to promote the Union of Baptists with itself. It must surely be very difficult for any Baptist who feels that his first duty is to be faithful to Christ, and the promotion of his will, to accept them.

Obituary.

MEMOIR OF JAMES ALEXANDER HALDANE BROWN, BY HIS FATHER.

My dear Son, James Alexander Haldane, was born in Coleraine in the North of Ireland, on the 14th day of August, 1850. It was the earnest prayer of the venerable man whose name he bore, expressed in a letter addressed to myself, some months before that worthy gentleman's death, that "his name might be written in the Lamb's book of life, and proclaimed in the great day before an assembled world." I have every confidence that this prayer has been answered in part, and that it shall be answered in full on the morning of the resurrection.

James was always a very amiable child—so much so, that, I doubt not, the theologians of a certain school, would have adduced him as a proof of the perfect innocence of children, until corrupted by the immoral influences with which they are surrounded. He had, however, a very different view of his own character. One morning, when he was only about seven years old, he said to his mother, "Mamma, I could not sleep any last night for thinking about my sins." His mother expressed the hope that the Spirit of God was dealing with him, and spoke to him of the love of Jesus. His elder brother was impressed about the same time; but neither of them would profess to love the Saviour! Often have I asked them, "Do you love Jesus?"—"I do not know," was the invariable reply.

I would ask again, "Do you love *me*?" They would answer without hesitation, "Yes." I would then endeavour to shew them, that if they knew they loved me; but did not know whether they loved Jesus, the reason must be that they *felt* love in the one case but not in the other. About the beginning of the "Irish Revival," I felt much impressed about their condition, and one Sabbath afternoon, at the prayer meeting, I solicited the prayers of the church at Conlig in their behalf, where I was then labouring in word and doctrine. Prayers were fervently offered. There was much emotion in the meeting. Many tears were shed, and the children wept aloud.

Some days after this, having had occasion to see Mr. Killen, one of the Presbyterian ministers of Lumber, I asked him to request the prayers of the people of God on their behalf. He approved of the proposal, and I afterwards learned that prayers had been offered for them in his congregation every evening, until they experienced peace in believing.

On the following Monday evening, Mr. Workman, of Belfast, delivered an address in the Presbyterian meeting-house of Conlig. The address was characterised by great fervour, and was well adapted to children. Both the boys were very attentive; but James' eye, which was moistened with tears, remained fixed on the speaker from beginning to end. At the close of the service I asked in a whisper, "Do you feel willing to come to Jesus, James?" He answered with faltering voice and tremulous lip, "Yes." When opportunity of conversing was obtained, I asked, "Do you think, James, you love Jesus now?" He replied in a subdued tone, "Yes—a little—not very much—I would like to love him more." Next day, he told me without hesitation, that he loved the Saviour—that he was sure his sins were washed away in the blood of Christ—and that he could not be deceived, for his conscience told him so. In the course of ten days after, his brother found peace.

About six months after this, having expressed a desire for baptism and church fellowship, I proposed both the boys as candidates. It is not customary in Ireland to require candidates to relate their experience before the church. The testimony of the minister, and two messengers appointed to converse with the parties is deemed sufficient. In their case, however, I thought the best impression would be made by themselves, as no deputation could represent children so well as their own artless tale. They accordingly appeared before the church, and in answer to questions put to them, gave an account of their faith and experience. They were unanimously approved of, and on that day fortnight (November 13th, 1859), baptised in the presence of a large congregation. Before the administration of the ordinance, each stated the views which he entertained of his natural character—what his condition must have been, had he died unconverted—what foundation he built his hopes upon, and how he meant to conduct his future life. *James was only nine years of age when he thus publicly devoted himself to Christ.* His natural talents now began to develope themselves, and from that period forward he would engage in prayer with much propriety in the family; and occasionally at fellowship meetings. His progress in knowledge at the national school which was under my care in the village was very considerable; but his capacity for learning was made very apparent at the model school of Newtownards. There he enjoyed every facility for receiving information, and his thirst for knowledge was insatiable. His teachers treated him with great kindness, and he loved them dearly. Every day was a feast day, and the progress which he made in the various branches of literature and science, especially *natural philosophy* was very remarkable. The manner in which he acquitted himself at the public examinations attracted general attention. While pursuing his literary studies, the sacred science of theology was by no means neglected. His favourite authors were Booth and Haldane. Haldane's evidences yielded him much pleasure, and I believe

there was not a sentiment expressed by either of these writers, which he did not fully comprehend and remember. He very fully embraced the views of Carson and Haldane, on the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, and only a fortnight before his death, made some critical remarks on an author which he was then reading on the opposite side of the question.

But, alas! When he was only about thirteen years old—when he had given indications of superior talent—when he had become decided for God—when he had become a general favourite—the Lord in his all wise, but mysterious providence, laid his hand on him, and we were obliged to remove him from school. In common with several other members of the family, he was visited with influenza, accompanied with some kind of fever. The other children recovered, but he never regained his strength. Our esteemed brother, Mr. Henry, of Belfast, expressed his fears, and in accordance with his desire, we consulted an eminent physician whom he recommended. The medical gentleman informed us there was disease in the left lung, and that he was not sanguine as to the result. Under his treatment he seemed to recover considerably, but change of climate, and other circumstances, told unfavourably on him, and, perhaps, hastened his death. The family were generally unwell at the time of leaving Conlig, and continued so for some time after. The others gradually recovered; but James as gradually declined, and on the 16th of April, he was released from sufferings which he bore with exemplary patience, and entered on the rest that remaineth for the people of God, in the 17th year of his age.

Having said this much in reference to the intellectual and Christian character of this dear departed youth, I shall now subjoin the testimony of his much esteemed teacher, the Head Master of Newtownards Model School. In a letter of condolence addressed to myself, he says, "Dear Sir, I deeply sympathise with you in your bereavement. The separation is a loss to you, which cannot be repaired until the Lord comes with all his Saints; but to him it is great gain. He has gone to be with the Lord who loved him and gave himself for him. My recollection of your son is altogether sweet and fragrant. In our relations as teacher and pupil not an unpleasant word or even look ever passed between us. What an attentive listener he was, how eager to obtain knowledge of all kinds; but above all of eternal truth. I have seldom met a boy of his years that had such a thorough knowledge of the word of God. His mind seemed to be specially adapted for penetrating the deeper mysteries of Divine truth. While he was with me, I was always sure that there was one listening to, and appreciating all I said. I was deeply grieved when ill health prevented his attendance, but I hope to renew with him the glorious theme, where there shall be no death, no sorrow, no pain, no separation. Please to convey my heartfelt sympathy to Mrs. Brown. I am, dear Sir, yours very truly.—M. HARBISON."

My own heart fully responds to the sentiments expressed by Mr. Harbison. My loss is irreparable, indeed, I have lost a darling son—one who was in every sense, a child after my own heart—one who had become an intelligent companion—one who tenderly sympathised with me in all my trials—one who would have been the comfort and support of his parents in declining years. It is saying much, but no more than the truth, when I say, he never said or did the thing that grieved me, and to the day of his death, my personal comfort was as studiously considered by him, as if he had been the father and I the child. But the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.

He hated sin in every form, and never would suffer it to pass unreproved. Only a few days before his death, he encouraged me faithfully to expose evil both from the pulpit and the press, and leave all consequences with the Lord. How manfully, how consistently, how constantly did he lift up his testimony for God and truth! But now his testimony is

finished, and his dear lips are silent in the grave. He could not endure that which was *wrong*, and his ransomed spirit has fled to that happy world where all is *right*.

The case of this dear child, furnishes us with a striking example of the power of prayer (Matt. xix. 19, 20), and a practical illustration of our Lord's words, (Matt. xix, 14). It lets us see how early children are capable of becoming acquainted with the Redeemer, and should encourage parents to imbue the minds of their children with religious truth *as soon as reason begins to dawn*. God is able "out of the mouths of babes and sucklings to perfect praise," and will do so in answer to prayer.

It encourages children, too, to seek the Lord even in childhood, "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come unto me," says the kind Redeemer. Dear children, comply with this kind invitation. Jesus, who in the days of his flesh, took the little children in his arms, and blessed them, still stands with open arms to receive you. O fall into his kind, kind arms. His service will make you truly happy in time and eternity. James was by no means a melancholy child. He was as happy as it was possible for a child to be. He experienced the truth of the maxim of the wise King of Israel, "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are paths of peace." But O how happy he is now! Accept of the same Saviour whom James served and loved, and follow him to that happy, happy home, where he is gone—where the inhabitants shall not say, "I am sick," for the people that dwell there are forgiven their iniquities.

JOHN BROWN.

Oswaldtwistle, Accrington, 2nd May, 1867.

Correspondence.

A PRESBYTERIAN ON THE COMMUNION QUESTION.

To the Editors of the Primitive Church Magazine.

MY DEAR SIRS,—Perhaps the following paragraph from the organ of the Presbyterian body in America, may not be unacceptable to your readers. The writer brands us as heretics, not on account of our views on the Communion question, but on Baptism. While he condemns the latter he justifies the former. His reasoning is as unanswerable as it is in harmony with the Divine Word.

Yours truly, B. H. E., S.

"Open communion is an absurdity when it means communion with the unbaptised. I would not for a moment consider a proposition to admit an unbaptised person to the communion: and can I ask a Baptist so to *stultify* himself and ignore his own doctrine as *to invite me to commune with him*, while he believes I am unbaptised? I want no sham union and no sham unity, and if I held the Baptist notion about immersion, I would no more receive a Presbyterian to the communion than I would now receive a Quaker. . . .

Let us have unity indeed, but not at the expense of principle, and let us not ask the Baptist to ignore or be inconsistent with his own doctrine. Let us not either make an outcry at his "close communion," which is but faithfulness to principle, until we are prepared to be "open communionists" ourselves; from which stupidity may we be for ever preserved. Let us war, not with his close communion, but with his doctrine that *immersion is baptism*."

NEARNESS TO GOD.—I cannot express the good of keeping up a good correspondence and connection with God; let me live near him, and I am sure to live far off from sin.

Poetry.

OUR ONE LIFE.

'Tis not for man to trifle! Life is brief
And sin is here.
Our age is but the falling of a leaf,
A dropping tear.
We have no time to sport away the hours,
All must be earnest in a world like ours.

Not many lives, but only one have we,
One, only one!
How sacred should that one life ever be,
That narrow span!
Day after day filled up with blessed toil,
Hour after hour still bringing in new spoil.

Our being is no shadow of thin air,
No vacant dream,
No fable of things that never were,
But only seem.
'Tis full of meaning as of mystery,
Though strange and solemn may that meaning be.

Our sorrows are no phantom of the night
No idle tale,
No cloud that floats along a sky of light
On summer gale.
They are the true realities of earth,
Friends and companions even from our birth.

O life below! how brief and poor and sad!
One heavy sigh.
O life above! how long, how fair and glad!
An endless joy.
Oh! to be done with daily dying here;
Oh! to begin the living in yon sphere!

O day of time, how dark! O sky and earth,
How dull your hue!
O day of Christ, how bright! O sky and earth,
Made fair and new!
Come, better Eden, with thy fresher green;
Come, brighter Salem, gladden all the scene!

Page for the Young.

A NICE HIDING PLACE.—A TRUE STORY.

One morning I went to my pleasant schoolroom and found many vacant seats. Two little scholars, who had been with us a few days before, now lay cold in death, and others were very sick. The diptheria had entered our village and our school. The children were weeping bitterly as I went in, and some of them ran quickly to me, saying; "O, teacher, Ninnie and Georgie are dead. What shall we do? Do you think *we* shall be sick and die?"

I touched the bell gently as a signal for the opening of the school, and when they had all taken their seats, I said:

"Children, you are all alarmed at the approach of this terrible disease. You sorrow for the death of your mates and fear that you too may be taken. Many of you have asked me, *What* shall we do? I know of but

one way to escape this trouble, and that is to *hide* from it. If you will listen, I will read you of a hiding place."

All listened eargerly while I read the 91st Psalm. I made no comments, but in few words asked that the Comforter would carry His message to their hearts. They all seemed hushed by the sweet words of the Psalmist, and the morning lesson went on as usual.

At noon a sweet little girl named Lizzie came to me and said, "Teacher, are you not afraid of the diptheria?" "No," I answered. "Well, shouldn't you if you thought you should be sick and die?" "No, dear, I trust not." Lizzie stopped her questioning, and looked me full in the face for some minutes, with thoughtful, wondering eyes, then her face brightened a little —"Oh, I know now," she said. I know why you are not afraid. You are hiding under God's wings. Oh, what a nice place to hide! I thought of that as you read the chapter. I wish I could hide there too. Then I should not be afraid of the diptheria or anything else. Is there room for *me* too?"

"Yes, Lizzie," I said, "room for you and for every one who wishes to come. Oh! he longs so much more than you can think to *hide* you in His arms, to clasp you in His heart, to wash out your sins in His own blood. Used as He is to the music of Heaven, with its choirs of ten thousands of thousands, yet it will be far sweeter in His ears to hear your childish voice whispering, 'Jesus, thou art my hiding place.' Will you not say with your whole heart those precious words?" A soft, *I will* was her only answer, but I trust at that glad hour Lizzie sought and found the shelter of her Saviour's wing.

Reviews.

A Memoir of Mr. Josh. Harbottle, Baptist Minister, Accrington, with selections from his Literary Reviews. By the Rev. THOS. TAYLOR, of Tottlebank; with a Preface by the Rev. JOSH. ANGUS, D.D.

OUR friend, the Rev. Thomas Taylor, has compiled the memoir of this eminently Christian man, and devoted minister of the gospel, with the disadvantage of very scanty materials. Mr. Harbottle's manner of life furnished few incidents, and his unassumed humility prevented him from perpetuating his name by a continuous diary. To those who knew our departed brother, this little volume will recall to their minds the leading traits of his character, and some of the incidents of his life. They will not fail to remember the gentleness which made him great, the charm which he threw over ordinary topics, and the sterling piety which enriched his conversation. In his best days—with his Greek Testament in one pocket, and the other filled with tracts —he was prepared to contend for the faith with the sceptic or the educated ritualist, or to drop the good seed of the kingdom by the way side for the way-faring man. As a preacher he was neither grand nor profound, nor even scholastic; but he was sound, earnest, and decided. He loved the doctrines of the cross, he preached them, and won souls to Christ. At Accrington and Little Moor End, the chief scenes of his labours, his name is still fragrant. The leading impression left upon the minds of those who knew him was that of goodness. The greatness of the scholar was eclipsed by the piety of the saint. We cannot but regret that so distinguished a man should have spent his life in comparative obscurity. He was scarcely known beyond a limited circle of attached friends; he shrunk from all publicity and popular applause, content to cherish the hope which he has now realised—that his Divine Master would say to him at last, "Well done."

Under great disadvantages from the causes we have mentioned, Mr. Taylor has performed his task with credit to himself. The volume is enriched by

a preface from the pen of Dr. Angus, a relative of Mr. Harbottle, and formerly his pupil. With his accustomed genial manner, the scholar gives some interesting reminiscences of the tutor. There is also a portrait at the commencement of the volume, which appears to have been taken at an advanced period of life. It gives only an imperfect idea of what Mr. Harbottle really was in the prime of his days. At that time there was an air of Christian cheerfulness which he partly lost in old age though it was revived when in the course of conversation any important topic interested him.

The literary remains are scanty, but the hymn—

"Farewell, dear friends, beloved,"

has taken its place with the hymns of Watts, and Doddridge, and Fawcett. It is, and will be the song of Christians as long as English psalmody and English piety shall be preserved. Many happy meetings have been closed with this cheerful anthem. At our last interview with Mr. Harbottle he presented us with a copy of a Hebrew hymn which he had composed for the first baptism in Jordan, after the return of the Jews to their own land, a hymn which Hebrew scholars have pronounced admirably written. It only remains that we should add that Mr. Harbottle held with earnest and conscientious tenacity the distinctive sentiments of "The Primitive Church Magazine," and these views he professed, and constantly defended. We thank Mr. Taylor for this memorial of departed worth, and hope that it will have a wide circulation.

Reformers and Performers; or the Reformation Men of the sixteenth century, and Ritualistic Priests of the nineteenth century contrasted. By an old EX-CHURCHMAN. Houlston and Wright, London.

THIS is an excellent tract of twenty-four pages for the present time. Its object is to call attention to the striking contrast between English Reformers of the sixteenth century, and the present Puseyite party in the church of England, as to their estimate of Popery. In doing so it revives the protests of the past against the idolatries of the church, and the tyranny of the Bishop of Rome. It is cheering to find that people are beginning to be aware of the dangerous network which is being drawn around our civil and religious liberties. This little work is fitted to do good service. It is by a Baptist.

Intelligence.

SAXONY.

BELOVED BRETHREN.—My heartiest salutations first of all. Having returned the other day from a longer mission tour than usual, I now review it with its difficulties and hardships, its privileges and results, and shall at once give you this review as a report of our proceedings:

First of all, however, I might mention that during the first days of April I had to remove to another lodging, which I found rather troublesome, though my furniture and effects are not very many; still, I thought it will be far better when once we shall remove to another world, we shall then, according to the Lord's wise arrangement, not be troubled with any thing, not even with the least; yea, quite light and free we shall ascend, our sins we shall not carry with us, for they are not, having been drowned in the blood of Christ, nor our good works, for they follow, and all we require afterwards and above we shall find ready in the mansions prepared for us by Christ Jesus our Lord.

On the first Sunday of April we opened our new meeting hall in Halle, which we hired some time ago; it costs us a good deal more for rent, but we took it because it is far larger and better situated to get numbers of persons under the sound of the gospel.

At the opening it was filled with hearers, when I preached in the forenoon on "the blessedness of Christianity" (Prov. iii. 17), and in the afternoon the theme of all our preaching, "Christ crucified." (1 Cor. i. 23). Next to this I supplied, as I do from time to time, our stations with Bibles, Testaments, tracts, and other Christian literature, which by the members are sold and distributed abroad.

On Good-Friday, which here is called Char (suffering) Friday, I went after the services in the town into the country, where I was expected by a large gathering, to which I spoke from Lam. i. 12. I got the people to look from the weeping prophet to the weeping, suffering, and dying Saviour, of whom Jeremiah in his tears and sorrow was a type, and then we took our text as the words of Jesus, or a cry from the cross, and considered—I., The great sorrow and suffering of the Saviour:—"Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me." (He suffered in body and soul). II. The cause of his sorrow. "The Lord has afflicted me in the days of his fierce anger." (The Father's anger—and our sins). III. The universal and wicked indifference of men towards this. "Is it *nothing* to you, all ye that *pass by?*" IV. The beseeching admonition—"Behold, and see!"

The day after I set out for longer tours, and first went to Altenburg, where, during the so-called Easter-days, the conferences of both our churches, Halle and Oederan, took place. Both churches are alike in every respect, having not only the same sentiments, but also one and the same pastor. It was indeed a happy and harmonious meeting of them. Already on Saturday evening it was my pleasure to speak in a church meeting with four converts who applied for baptism; they were joyfully received, and that same night by the clear light of the full moon they were buried with their Lord into the floods of a river. On Sabbath morning after a prayer meeting I preached on Rom. viii. 34. Soon after this I conversed before the church, or rather churches, with another applicant, a young lady from Leipzig, who could not come the day before, and strongly desired to be baptised; there being no doubt of a real conversion I went with her in the afternoon out of the town to a certain house near a river, where we had been the night before. Her baptism was a glorious one, because it was done not only in the presence of God and his angels and his people, but also in the presence of the world and the devil, for amongst the spectators were a number of enemies and scoffers, who raised a tremendous noise, which however was over sounded by the mention of "the Father, the Son, and the Spirit." She was baptised under the prayers of God's people, and the sneers of the world, and God's will was done in spite of all hell. After our return to town the young disciples were received into the church, which now surrounded the Lord's table. After the evening service, at which I had the opportunity to testify the gospel of the grace of God to a crowded audience, a lovefeast was held which lasted till after midnight, and made us forget that we were still on earth.

Having done here I went into the so called "Dogs-Turkey," where I was expected in a number of places in which arrangements for my preaching had been made. It was now spring time, every farmer went out to sow his seed, that he may have a harvest in autumn, how could I have spent that time at home; far less, since our field is the largest, even "all the world," and the region I now went to has spiritually been greatly neglected and specially needs a good sowing. Since it was on this tour and in this region my chief business to sow first the good seed, I shall only mention some of my experiences in this, which were very different. As for instance, at my first meeting I had only one hearer, an old woman of nearly eighty years, she became a member of our church long since, and is standing quite alone in her place, wherefore I on the way to the first station visited her, which was a great joy to her, and after we had celebrated the Lord's death I went further, and in the place

I was expected at night I had a meeting of several hundreds of persons to whom I spoke from the *death of Jesus* according to Matt. xxvii. 50. We remarked that Jesus died the most *painful* death, and the most *shameful* death; yet also an *honourable, a glorious, a victorious, and an effective death.*

I am sure I should be too long and weary you, if I should take you along the whole of my tour, and not only should I weary you, I should ask too much from you, and must fear that you would never accompany me again, for, as I said before, your experience would be various; sometimes you would have to ride with dogs, instead of in a railway carriage, and sometimes as in sandy and hilly places, you would have even to drag the waggon in company with the dogs, for so I had to do, it being just in the Dogs-Turkey where we have no trains or a better mode of travelling. Sometimes I had sufficient to live upon, to eat and to drink, but sometimes I could get food only once or twice a day, and repeatedly it happened that I went to bed after walking many miles and preaching with all exertions rather hungry. Sometimes the weather was very hot, so that I had to put off almost everything, sometimes it was so cold that it was a good thing for me that I had to walk most of the way. In some places I was much expected and respected and treated as a great man, whom they knew already by his books, in other places the enemies had warned the people of me, sometimes as a Jesuit, sometimes as a Mahomedan priest, which, however, had only made the masses curious, and induced them to attend the meeting to see and hear such a curiosity as a Mahomedan priest. In short, everything reminded me of being in a Turkey. In some places the bailiffs had forbidden, or at least tried to hinder my meetings, and in other places the bailiffs were most happy at my coming and did everything to wait upon me and help me. Sometimes I had a leader to the various places, at other times I had to find the way myself, which is rather difficult since we have large forests here and no regular ways. Such a tour is generally very tiresing, but on the whole tour I had almost every evening a hall to preach the gospel, and mostly to crowded audiences; besides this I had often opportunity to speak to persons privately on their souls concern and to distribute a large number of tracts. Whilst in the first meeting on this tour I had only one hearer, in the last I had nearly, if not above one thousand persons who listened most attentively to the proclamation of a full, free and finished salvation in Christ Jesus, offered by free grace unto all who believe in him.

Thanks be to the Lord who gave us grace and strength to go out and sow his seed. Our prayer is now that he may give also the fruitful rains and the increase. We trust to his word that "our labour in the Lord is not in vain," whilst I would ask you to help us to pray for an abundant harvest, all the sheaves of which we will lay at the feet of Jesus to whom, being all in all, belongs all in all!

Assuring you with all our friends of my best regards and warmest love,

I am, yours in the best of bonds,

MORITZ GEISSLER.

Halle, 31st May, 1866.

THE BAPTIST TRACT SOCIETY.

The Annual Meeting of the Baptist Tract Society was held on Wednesday evening, May 15th, in the lower room, Exeter Hall. Rev. H. Dowson, of Chamber Hall, Bury, presided. The report was read by the Secretary. It stated that—more than a quarter of a century had now elapsed since the Society was formed. The number of the Society's issues had received a greater addition during the past year than in any former one. Forty-seven new tracts, four handbills, and two children's books had been published during the year. The total number of tracts published was thus raised to 322, that of handbills to 80, and that of children's books to 34. The number of tracts and handbills issued during the year had been nearly 800,000, and since the commencement of the Society more than four millions and a-half had been circulated. The number of subscribers had increased

from 60 or 70 in former years, to 1,200. The total amount voted in grants during the year, was £176 6s. 7d., comprising 269,800 tracts and handbills, which had been sent to brethren in Germany, Madras, Trinidad, Ceylon, Canada, New Zealand, and Scotland, as well as to very numerous localities in this country. The Chairman said that the distribution of tracts had become a most important means for the dissemination of Christain truths. Objection was sometimes made to tract distribution, that working men did not read the tracts when given to them. He held that the same objection might as reasonably be urged against the dissemination of truth by the preachers of the gospel, since many working men would not attend their ministry. It was an acknowledged fact that the distribution of religious tracts was a most important means of teaching religious truth in the present day. Not one of the least of the many societies for the publication of these tracts was the Baptist Tract Society. It had its origin in small circumstances, but now it had become a most important and flourishing institution. There were several reasons which led him to commend to their regard the Baptist Tract Society. First, it was eminently catholic—not catholic in certain senses of the word, but as comprehending all Divine truth, seeking to demonstrate every portion of the truth of God's Holy Word. Then, secondly, it disseminated that which was manly, true, and pure; and he commended it also because it made no great pretence: it went and did its work very silently, but effectually. Lastly, it was a denominational, and not a sectarian society. He believed the time had come when they should distinctly, earnestly, and solemnly, without any mental reservation whatever, and even dogmatically, if they pleased, go forth and assert those great principles of their common faith which their forefathers held with such great tenacity. The speaker then referred to what he denominated the "extraordinary" proceedings of the Congregational Union—referring to the discussion which took place relative to the admission of certain Baptist Ministers into the Pædobaptist Union. He held that they must be determined to maintain the distinctive principles of their denomination, and that, he considered, could be done without being sectarian. The speaker then referred to the Society's action on ritualism. They would resist these ritualistic encroachments—not by physical force, but by moral means, and the dissemination of the simple truths of the gospel. He concluded by observing that he had a young man under training, who had been an Italian Roman Catholic priest, but who was now being educated with a view of becoming a Baptist minister in his native city, Naples. He had mentioned him to the committee, believing that he might do considerable service by the translation of their tracts into the Italian language. —Rev. T. Baugh, of Islington, moved the adoption of the Report, and the election of Officers. He could not overrate the value of pure literature. A poet had said, "Let me write the nations ballads, and I care not who makes its laws." He, like the Chairman, was denominational, though not sectarian. Though the difference between Baptists and Pædobaptists had been termed "a little matter," it was one which could not be destroyed. He concluded by urging the more general distribution of tracts among the people.—Mr. Jenkins, as a representative of the Principality of Wales, seconded the proposition, and showed how Baptist ministers in his country worked with their Independent brethren in a most fraternal way, without compromising, or even concealing, their own convictions on the point of baptism.—Rev. S. Couling, of Scarborough, moved the second resolution, referring to the past success of the Society, and the necessity for the operations of the Holy Spirit to continue and increase the same. Great results arose from small beginnings. The Christian had the satisfaction of knowing that, while fame and riches were passing away, work for Christ could never die.—Mr. Whitehead, the Collector of the Society, gave an account of his work; after which, — The Rev. C. Stovel, in

seconding the resolution, gave a most interesting address, in which he protested against any surrender of their views as Baptists. He remarked that it had been said it was a pity so little a matter should separate them from the Pædobaptists. He combated the notion that it was a small matter at all to be baptised into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and he insisted upon the obligation of a compact taken in so solemn a manner. If there was nothing sacred in the matter, where, he asked, should they find sacredness at all? No wonder that they found social compacts broken in all directions, if such laxity prevailed. The great importance of their labour hinged upon this,—depending on the name of Christ, and being baptised into the name of Christ. Mr. Stovel referred to what would be the result of the carrying out of this obligation, and remarked that there were a certain class who were made Christians by act of Parliament; they were Parliamentary Christians — and they were not allowed to believe in anything that was not sanctioned by such Acts. If they inquired into what those Acts included, they would find that it was a hotch-potch affair—like pork in sausages—having no sort of organization at all. Having referred to the Romish authority,—which held that no king had any control over religion, with which he thoroughly agreed, he pointed out the Romish inconsistency. The Rev. W. Alderson moved the third resolution, expressive of sympathy with the Society in its efforts against ritualism. Though some might consider the statement of the report egotistic—that Baptists possessed an advantage over other denominations in opposing the errors referred to, he believed in its truth. Infant sprinkling was one of the pillars of Popery; it ignored individual conviction of truth, which was essential to membership in the church of Christ, and was an unsuccessful attempt to make Christianity universal. He was not, however, an alarmist, and did not believe in the ultimate success of popery in England —he had too much faith in the Bible, the pulpit, the Sunday-school, and the Baptist Tract Society. The Church of England, although it has been called "the breakwater to Popery," was in reality, the channel to it.—The Rev. C. Kirtland seconded the motion, and spoke of the kind assistance afforded by the Society in helping the cause of the British and Irish Home Mission. A vote of thanks to the Chairman, on the motion of the Rev. G. Wyard, seconded by E. J. Oliver, Esq., the Treasurer, terminated the proceedings.

PRESENTATION TO THE REV. A. SPENCER, AT CULLINGWORTH.

ON Tuesday, April 23rd, a large public gathering took place in the Oddfellows' Hall, Cullingworth. The occasion was one of great importance to the village and to all parties concerned, viz.:—the presentation of some valuable testimonials to the Rev. A. Spencer, who at the close of March last resigned his charge as the pastor of the Baptist church in the above village, which office he had sustained for near four years. In the afternoon there was a large tea party, the tables were presided over by ladies who are chiefly connected with the Baptist congregation. In the evening there was a public meeting. The hall was crowded to excess, and many were unable to obtain admittance into the place. The chair was occupied by Mr. Benjamin Northrop. He was supported upon the platform by the Rev. J. F. N. Eyre, M.A., incumbent of Denholme; Rev. A. Spencer, Rev. J. Lee, (Baptist) Slack Lane; Rev. R. Grey (Free Church), Keighley; and Messrs. J. Harling and T. Sutcliffe (two of Mr. Spencer's deacons), J. Northrop, Esq., James Northrop, R. Lang, P. Driver, G. Higgins, and others. The chairman in opening the meeting said, the object of the meeting was to show the Rev. A. Spencer a mark of sincere regard and affection, and to show him that he was highly appreciated by the inhabitants of Cullingworth. He then called upon J. Northrop, Esq., to present an address on parchment, and £8 to Mr. Spencer. The following is a copy of the address:—

"PRESENTED TO THE REV. A. SPENCER ON THE OCCASION OF HIS LEAVING THE PASTORATE IN CONNECTION WITH THE BAPTIST CHURCH, CULLINGWORTH.

"REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,—We the undersigned, on our own behalf, and on the behalf of the inhabitants of Cullingworth, having learned that you have resigned the pastorate in connection with the Baptist Chapel in this village, take this opportunity of expressing to you our sincere regret at your removal.

"Several years have elapsed since you first came among us, during which time we have had fair and ample opportunities of observing your conduct, and of estimating your worth.

"It is therefore with feelings of peculiar pleasure that, upon this public occasion, we can assure you that your deportment as a Christian minister has met with our unqualified approval. The propriety of your behaviour, the politeness of your manners, the amiableness of your temper, the many private virtues which have adorned your profession, and your readiness upon all occasions to assist in every good work, have won for you the most favourable opinion of the public generally.

"We have, therefore, felt it to be our bounden duty to give you some token of our sincere regard. This token has, we are happy to say, (owing to the kindness and liberality of your friends) assumed a tangible shape, and we hope that in the presentation that will be made to you this evening, you will be convinced that our love is not in word only, but in deed and in truth.

"We earnestly hope that God in his providence will speedily direct you to a more extended sphere of usefulness, make you happy and successful in your work, guide you by his counsel, satisfy you with long life, and shew you his salvation."

Signed,

ISAAC NORTHROP,
JAMES NORTHROP,
JOHN HEATON,
THOMAS MEDCALFE,
JOHN HARLING,
ROBERT LANG,
P. DRIVER,
WILLIAM FLETCHER,
G. HIGGINS,
BENJAMIN NORTHROP.

April 23rd, 1867.

Mr. Northrop in presenting the address and the money, paid a high compliment to Mr. Spencer as a neighbour, and a minister of the gospel. The chairman then called upon Mr. John Harling, who presented to the reverend gentleman a splendid edition of Dr. Adam Clarke's Commentary, in six volumes. Mr. Harling said he felt highly honoured by having to take any part in the presentation to Mr. Spencer. He knew him to be a kind and social man. Mr. James Northrop was next called upon. He presented to Mr. Spencer an elegant timepiece, value £9 9s., and bearing the following inscription:—"Presented to the Rev. A. Spencer, by the inhabitants of Cullingworth, as a token of their esteem for him as a zealous pastor and kind friend, an excellent neighbour, and a consistent and devoted Christian.—April 23rd, 1867."

The Rev. A. Spencer on rising was loudly cheered. After referring to his settlement in the village, he said, he had felt a deep interest in the promotion of whatever tended to advance the moral and spiritual state of the village. He had not been without his troubles, but he had found some staunch friends. His friends were more numerous than he had imagined. He valued the testimonials which his friends had given him because they were really valuable; but he valued them much more because they were the expression of the confidence and kind regard of his friends. He hoped he had not laboured in vain in the village. He was sorry to part with his friends at Cullingworth; but he hoped they would one day meet to part no more.

Addresses were afterwards delivered expressive of high esteem for Mr. Spencer, by Mr. Thomas Sutcliffe, Rev. J. Lee, Rev. J. F. N. Eyre, M.A., and R. Grey. The meeting closed with the usual votes of thanks.

GOLCAR.

LAYING THE MEMORIAL STONE OF A BAPTIST CHAPEL.—On Friday April 19th, 1867, the memorial stone of a Baptist chapel at Golcar was laid in the presence of a numerous assembly, by William Shaw, Esq., of Dale House, Longwood. The chapel, which is being erected on a plot of land near the old chapel, will accommodate 1,003 persons, in addition to 300 scholars. It will have a round

gallery, and will be well lighted. The cost is estimated at £4,000, and towards this the sum of £2,350 has been subscribed. The contractors are —Mr. John Hellewell, Crimble, mason; Mr. Joseph Thornton, Golcar joiner; Mr. Jonathan Shaw, Golcar, painter and plasterer; Mr. Fawcett, Westgate, Huddersfield, plumber.—The existing chapel, which was opened on the 22nd April, 1835, will accommodate 630 persons, and of late having been found to be too small, it was determined to erect a new one. The proceedings commenced with the singing of a hymn, after which, the Rev. H. W. Holmes, of Pole Moor, engaged in prayer. Mr. Edwin Sykes, of Linthwaite, then stated that a bottle which was to be placed beneath the stone, in a cavity, contained an account of Golcar Baptist Church, a short account of the old chapel erection and of the new one, a copy of the faith held by that church as taken from the trust deed, the names of the ministers, building committee, &c. He read the account of the opening of the old chapel, and said, since the opening the chapel had been paid for, a minister's house built and paid for, the burial-ground extended and paid for, and they hoped by 1868 to have the new chapel paid for.—Mr. H. Fisher, of Marsden, then presented to Mr. W. Shaw a mallet and an elegant silver trowel, suitably inscribed, for the purpose of laying the stone.—Mr. Shaw duly performed the ceremony, and then laid upon the stone a bank-note for £100. He afterwards gave an address, and after alluding to the connection of his late father and Mr. Robert Smith with the chapel, proceeded at length to explain some of the distinctive points of the Baptist denomination, and also the position they occupied as Protestant Dissenters. He also remarked on the manner in which the Church of England was supported by the State, pointing out that she received grants for the colonial bishops, and was largely supported by Church-rates, and then by way of showing that the voluntary principle was sufficient to provide for the religious wants of a people, he referred to Jamaica, where the Established Church, receiving £20,000 a year from the colony, and £4,800 from the home Government, has only provided church accommodation for 46,000 persons, while the Baptists alone, by voluntary efforts, have provided accommodation for 51,000 persons.—The Rev. H. Dowson, theological tutor, Chamber Hall, near Bury, also gave an address in reference to the constitution of a church. —The Rev. H. W. Holmes pronounced the benediction, and the proceedings closed.—In the evening there was a tea party, followed by a meeting in the old chapel, at which the Rev. J. Barker, Lockwood; Rev. J. Hanson, Huddersfield; Rev. J. Parker, Salendine Nook; and other gentlemen took part in the proceedings.

YORKSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF BAPTIST CHURCHES.

THE annual meetings of the above association were held this year at Hebden Bridge, near Halifax. The meetings of the association commenced on Whit-Tuesday, and continued until the Thursday evening, under the moderatorship of the Rev. Josiah Green, the pastor of the Baptist church where the meetings were held. There was a large assemblage of ministers and delegates. The public services were very numerously attended from the commencement to the close; and the spirit which pervaded the meetings was deeply devotional and most comfortably harmonious. The Revs. J. Makepeace, of Bradford; H. Dowson, of Bury; and W. Best, B.A., of Leeds, were the preachers; and the circular letter, "On Christian Female Agency," prepared by the Rev. Dr. Evans, of Scarboro', was warmly approved by the association, and will shortly be published. From many of the churches the returns for the year are of the most encouraging character, and the total of baptisms for the year is very much in excess of those of the year previous. This is the more encouraging as there does not appear to have been anything spasmodic in the action of any of the churches, but rather a quiet yet earnest prosecution of proper and ordinary work. The difficult questions which press on the attention